

**What is influenza?**

Influenza or “flu” is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. There are two main types of flu viruses — A and B. Each type includes many related viruses or strains, each slightly different from the others. Type A epidemics are generally more frequent and severe than those of type B.

Who is at risk for influenza?

People of all ages can get the flu.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

Flu symptoms include fever, chills, headache, dry cough and aching in the back, arms and legs. The risk of developing severe complications, such as pneumonia and death, increases with age (especially in people older than 65) or for individuals with chronic medical conditions (such as diabetes; diseases of the heart, lungs or kidneys; severe anemia; or other chronic diseases that weaken the immune system, AIDS or HIV infection).

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within one to three days after being exposed.

How is influenza spread?

Flu is spread from person to person when a person with flu coughs, sneezes or talks, spreading the droplets through the air.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

An individual is able to spread the disease as long as he or she is infected with the virus. This is typically three to five days in adults and as many as seven days in children.

How is a person diagnosed?

The diagnosis usually is based on the appearance of classic signs and symptoms. However, laboratory tests are available to confirm this diagnosis.

What is the treatment?

Antibiotics will not work against the flu; however, antiviral drugs are available for the treatment of flu. Often treatment of symptoms is recommended, such as bed rest, drinking more than the usual amount of liquids and taking pain relievers to help reduce the discomfort of illness. Children with the flu should not be treated with aspirin.

Does past infection make a person immune?

People do build up immunity against the different types of flu, but the immunity can wane over time. Because flu viruses change over time, repeated infections can occur.

Should children or others be excluded from day care, school, work or other activities if they have influenza?

Yes. People with flu should stay home from school, work and day care. This not only helps in recovery, but also helps reduce the spread of flu to others in the facility.

What can be done to prevent the spread of influenza?

The best way to prevent the spread of flu is to get vaccinated every year. Additional ways to help reduce the spread of flu are to wash your hands frequently, avoid close contact with those who have not been vaccinated or are ill, cover your coughs and sneezes, throw your tissues in the trash and stay home when you are sick.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available at www.ndflu.com or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

This disease is a reportable condition. As mandated by North Dakota law, any incidence of this disease shall be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.

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